

VZCZCXYZ0001  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSK #1054 2491444  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 061444Z SEP 05  
FM AMEMBASSY MINSK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2916  
INFO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3109  
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KIEV 2882  
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3340  
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA 1390  
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 3008  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0637  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RHMFISI/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS MINSK 001054

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL  
STATE PLEASE PASS TO USAID/E&E/DGST PETER GRAVES  
KIEV FOR AID

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PHUM PGOV BO  
SUBJECT: IISEPS in Trouble Again

Ref: Minsk 436

¶1. (SBU) On September 2 Oleg Manaev, head of the deregistered polling agency IISEPS, discussed IISEPS' latest troubles with the authorities with Poloff. Belarus' Supreme Court revoked IISEPS' registration in April (reftel). Manaev subsequently registered IISEPS in Lithuania. In July, the Ministry of Justice sent Manaev a warning, accusing IISEPS of continuing to operate, and asked him to visit the MOJ to discuss. Manaev disregarded the summons. On August 26 the Minsk Department of Internal Affairs Office of Mass Actions summoned Manaev for a one-hour talk. [Note: this office usually deals with mass protests.] The police told him they did not want to deal with this, but the MOJ had ordered them to "talk" with Manaev. The MOJ claimed the MFA told them the OSCE in Vienna had quoted some IISEPS June polling data, so this was proof IISEPS was operating illegally.

¶2. (SBU) To clear things up (and avoid arrest), Manaev went with the police to the MOJ. Manaev admitted IISEPS had been deregistered, that he had re-registered in Vilnius, and that IISEPS' former members had conducted a June poll. However, he argued IISEPS' former members conducted the poll not as an organization, but as a group of private individuals, which is not illegal. According to Manaev, this flummoxed the MOJ. Manaev was released, but only after signing a written statement of what he had told the MOJ. Manaev thinks the GOB is looking for any legal way to shut IISEPS down in advance of 2006's presidential elections. Now that they have failed in this bureaucratic attempt, he fears the GOB will next employ violence.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Post agrees with Manaev that the GOB is likely seeking means to silence his organization before the 2006 elections. Belarus' other independent polling service, NOVAK, is currently under heavy financial pressure from the regime. However, to date Post has seen few cases where the Lukashenko regime has turned to violence. For the most part, the GOB prefers to use quasi-legal methods to silence the opposition. Rather than violence, Post feels Manaev and IISEPS are more likely to face exorbitant fines for their continued polling activities.

PHLIPOT